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ABSTRACT

The rationale, approaches, and mechanics of publishing a student yearbook in English-as-a-Second-Language programs are discussed, and examples are drawn from the experiences and practices at the University of Pennsylvania. The production of a yearbook is suggested as a context for student writing that transcends the scope of the essay and that can be adapted to any audience. Types of student contributions recommended include student interviews, essays done as class writing assignments, art and photography, cartoons, editorial comments, and reviews. The mechanical aspects of publication construction addressed include photocopying, typewriting, word processing, the inclusion of artwork, and binding. The process of preparing for publication an essay about Amsterdam is discussed, and a layout problem is offered as an example of specific issues that have had to be resolved. It is concluded that this type of communicative writing project provides a public purpose for writing to a wide audience, provides opportunities for task- and content-based discussions, provides a product in which students take great satisfaction, and can be used as a public relations tool to both promote the program and to inform the larger community. (MSE)

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An ESL Program Yearbook as Writing and Interactional Inspiration

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Presentation Outline

1. General types of Student Publications
   a) interviews of students in the class
   b) essays a writing class produces
   c) newsletter
   d) fieldtrip notes
   e) traditional yearbook format
2. Mechanics of publication construction
   a) handwritten pages xeroxed
   b) type written pages
   c) computer printed
   d) typeset
   e) bindings: staples, plastic bound, folded sheets
3. Penn yearbook process examples
   a) essay on Amsterdam
   b) layout discussion
4. Theoretical support for this type of communicative writing project.
   a) It can provide a public purpose for writing to a wide audience.
   b) A publication provides opportunities for task and content based discussions.
   c) A publication provides a product in which students justifiably take great satisfaction.
   d) A publication can be used as a public relations tool to promote the program, and also inform the greater community about the program.

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An ESL program yearbook as writing and interactional inspiration

Ruth Benander

This demonstration suggests one way to provide a context for student writing that goes beyond the scope of a pedagogical essay that has only the teacher for an audience. Several ways that teachers compensate for this narrow scope include; peer review, journal writing (making the teacher, or the students themselves, the explicit audience), or perhaps writing student interviews. Chimombo (1987) suggests that a class write letters to the editor as a way to bring reality to the writing class. While this is valuable for a single lesson, having the students become the editors themselves takes this idea a step further. I would like to suggest yet another way to introduce a wider context for student class writing that provides a broader and more immediate audience: an informally published journal or yearbook of student writings (Johnson,1981).

This demonstration will consider the kind of organization that goes into such a yearbook, how the students become involved, and what kind of language use is encouraged through this process. First I will discuss the general categories of submissions that can be included in a student publication. Second, I will introduce the mechanics of publication construction. Third, I will show some examples of what some of our students have produced in the course of creating a yearbook. Fourth, and lastly, I will outline the theoretical support for a student publication acting as a communicative activity.

PART I: General categories of submissions

Contributions to the journal or yearbook need not all be written. Drawings, layout, and photography all contribute to the publication. This variety of jobs allows students to show their talents in ways that are not dependent on fluent knowledge of English. It allows student to excel in something they can do well and perhaps alleviate the stress of having to learn a new language that doesn't always come out just right. However, in the negotiation of contribuing to the yearbook, they too are engaged in developing their language skills.

A publication of this kind incorporates several genres of writing. A student publication can include anything the teacher or class desires: interviews, essays, reviews, cartoons, editorial comments. Another genre that the yearbook offers for spontaneous writing in English is the tradition of yearbook signing at the end of the class. Being completely spontaneous and heartfelt, these small samples of writing are entertaining as well as instructive. For instance, one woman wrote to her friend, "It was wonderful. I will never remember you!". This statement may not be lexically on target, but the sentiment is strong.

A journal or a yearbook can be oriented to many different kinds of audiences. The traditional yearbook gears itself to the immediate community of the writers. A yearbook commonly includes photographs and artwork to create a insiders view of the community. The articles might be taken from writing classes in the program or individual submissions. Involving an entire program requires a

high level of organization and cooperation that might not be available in all cases. In this situation, a teacher might just put together a journal of the class' writing.

I have examples here of two books that individual teachers put together from only one class. In this format, the teachers had each student interview another student for the book by way of introduction of each person. The interview was followed by one of the student's better class essays. These books were intended for each student to take home and were only distributed to the class.

I spoke with one teacher who enthusiastically bound all the class' essays into a rather large book. Unfortunately, the class not very interested in the reulting tome. I suggest that a teacher be selective about which essays are put into a book, and that adding photos also makes the book more desirable to the students.

Some schools put out newsletters aimed at the general community and may serve as community outreach. Here is one example of such a newsletter. It comes out of a highschool and is distributed to the student body. The essays contained in this newsletter are aimed at all students, native speakers of English and non-native speakers alike.

An example of narrowly targeting the audience with wonderful results is when a teacher took her students to a local nursing home. This teacher took her students to a nursing home for her

students to interview the residents. After the visit she had each student write up the interview and compiled the interviews into a small book, copies of which were presented to the residents of the nursing home.

The audience and the content of a student publication can be adapted for individual circumstances, but the fact that the writing is meant to be read and enjoyed by someone other than the teacher and for a purpose other than pure evaluation of mastery of skills, adds a dimension to the project that can only increase satisfaction with the writing product.

At the English Language Programs of the University of Pennsylvania we publish an in-house Yearbook each academic session. These yearbooks include student writings, artwork, and photography. The editorial work, and all the layout and design, is supervised by the students. The majority of the writing comes from program writing classes. The book is distributed to all of the students in the program and is intended as a souvenir to be taken back to their homes. However, individual teachers sometimes additionally put out their own class-generated books using the production of a publication as the focus for the assignments in the writing course.

PART II: Mechanics of publication construction

The mechanics of putting out the hardcopy of the book can vary in terms of complexity. At the very least, the production is

greatly enhanced by access to a xerox machine since a mimeograph machine will not put out a copy that is as attractive to read.

The simplest book to make is merely xeroxing handwritten essays. This does not involve any typing skills on the part of teacher or students, and the cost of xeroxing is relatively low. I have an example of this kind of book from the trip to the nursing home that I mentioned. The students hand written essays were xeroxed in multiple copies, the class created a cover, and the book was bound with staples. Creating this book did not take a long time, and the residents of the nursing home enjoyed it immensely. The book was xeroxed on the program office xerox machine and was thus not very expensive since the program carried the xerox expenses.

If students have access to typewriters a slightly more complicated volume can be created. As part of the assignment in a certain class, the teacher required that students interview each other and type the interview. Students then selected their the essay which had written that session and whcih they liked best. The students typed the essay on their own. The teacher then asked that each student supply a photograph of themselves, and then the book was assembled, xeroxed, and plastic bound at a copy shop. This is also minimum work for the teacher since students are responsible for the formatting of their own essays. All the teacher has to do is arrange for the xeroxing and binding, though this could also be delegated to the students.

The next step in complexity involves computers. If computers are available, students can type their contributions directly into the computer and the entire book can be printed out as a consistent whole, the quality of which is dictated only by the available printer. Using a computer involves much more organization since many of the students will be encountering computers for the first time. Coordinating many files and their printing requires experience with both the hardware and the software. However, students helping students to understand and deal with computers generates tremendous amounts of verbal interaction.

Incidently, the amount of photography and art work also increase the complexity of the book since this can't be put on the computer, but must be incorporated in with the printed pages. In the yearbooks that I helped produce we incorporated all of these elements.

We used IBM pc's with Wordperfect version 4.1. We were able to have one person in charge of the organization of the project who managed the disks and the computers. The students were involved in reviewing essays that were submitted, taking photographs, and producing the artwork that appeared in the book. The entire group worked together on the final layout which took several hours since we needed to coordinate so many different kinds of material. The final printing was done on a laserprinter, which greatly enhanced the quality of the print, but a near-letter-quality dot matrix printer is almost just as good. We discovered that denser print is harder to read for lower level students and

chose to always use double spacing and lots of white space to make it more inviting to read.

[show examples of dense page and open page]

We also found that high contrast black and white photographs xeroxed the best. Since a program wide book ran longer than single class books, we xeroxed on both sides of the page. This process is very fast with a high speed business machine, but it is labor intensive (and cheaper) on smaller office machines. Again, we bound the copies of our year books in plastic at a copy shop.

Even more complex layout is possible with the help of Desk Top Publishing software or newer expanded versions of several wordprocessing programs. Of course you could always have the result typeset, but this process increases the cost as much as the professional appearance of the final copy.

PART IV: Penn Yearbook examples

An example of the changes a paper can go through, from initial submission to final printing can be seen in the following essay. This essay was written by a student from the Netherlands for one of her classes concerning the drug problem in Amsterdam. With her teacher she corrected the major grammatical points of the essay, but since the teacher had no background on the subject, nor any personal investment in the content of the essay, she did not comment on the argument to any extent. When this essay appeared before the group of students that were reviewing essays for the book, there was a long discussion of the argument she put forth

indicating that the drug problem in Amsterdam was exacerbated by South American drug kingpins. The South American students in the group took exception to this idea and questioned her on the validity of this argument. She agreed that without specific examples, she could not specifically single out South America since other countries contributed to the drug trade as well. The essay was again rewritten being more general concerning the origins of the drugs and being more specific about the effects of drugs on life in Amsterdam. The final version of the essay was very informative about an aspect of Amsterdam that few people consider and also succeeded in not insulting anybody. This process included not only a writing exercise for the author, but several very fiery discussions among the students. The students also gained an increased awareness of the nature of supporting evidence in argumentation.

This type of active discussion also occurs during the collating sessions when the book is finally assembled. Students must work together to accomplish the task set out for them. When there are students of the same native language working on a task, it takes a great deal of encouragement for them to negotiate in English. When there are several students with the same native language, the less skilled speakers and low interactors get less practice speaking English since the higher level, more assertive students take the role of interpreter for their native language group. However, we were fortunate in that several of our groups included a wide range of students with different native languages.

In these situations, even the low level speakers must use English to cope with the situation. For example, I had assigned the task of layout of the class photographs to a lower level Japanese speaker and a lower level Spanish Speaker. The Japanese speaker had the advantage of layout experience and the Spanish speaker had the advantage of a very assertive personality. Though they did not have complex grammar resources to communicate with, they did extraordinarily well communicating their opinions on how the pages should be laid out. Sometimes the conversation would degenerate to eloquent exchanges of "Yes!" and "No!" rich with conversational implicature.

PART VI: theoretical support for communicative writing projects

Writing for a communicative purpose can give the classroom essay new meaning for ESL students in a pre-academic program. A publication destined for public consumption is valuable in the following ways:

1. It can provide a genuine purpose for writing; (as opposed to writing to the teacher for a grade).

2. It can provide a genuine audience (the target of the publication).

3. A publication provides opportunities for task and content based discussions.

4. It provides a product in which students justifiably take great satisfaction.

5. It can be used as a public relations tool to promote the program, and also inform the greater community about the program.

A yearbook can focus on a particular audience, be it the class, the group interviewed, the program, or an entire university. Knowing that the essays will be offered to this wider audience adds a new perspective on subject, word choice, or even grammar. The purposes of the writing would be partly determined by what kind of publication you chose to make, whether it is a newsletter, a yearbook, a journal of essays, or any other written products the class chooses. Regardless of the format which is chosen, students have extra motivation to produce a careful final product since it will be in the public eye. Public writing could make the experience not only more demanding, but also more satisfying (Williams and Alden;1983).

A yearbook also inherently encourages the process approach to writing. A teacher can guide the class through generating an idea that people would be interested in reading, and to revising the draft until it is fit for publication. This context for the writing process incorporates peer editing and revision, as a part of the evaluation of pieces for the yearbook. Such a publication also includes considering many genres of writing such as editorial comments, interviews, and photograph captions.

Whereas journal writing can be a useful reflection for students where they can consider any idea without grades or correction, sometimes a journal can detour into personal reflections and even deeply personal problems such that a teacher might not feel comfortable in the position of confidant. For example, "Dear teacher, I think I'm in love with you. I hope it won't affect

my grade". A useful focus for a journal-writing assignment in its role of nonjudgemental sharing and generating of ideas (Spack and Sadaw;1983) could be reflecting on what to put into a publication, or how it should be organized, or things one might submit.

As well as being a writing exercise, this project also encourages a communicative context for language learning. Aside from the specialized vocabulary of publishing, students must negotiate with each other while putting the book together. Having a project which takes the focus off specifically learning language can help promote conversation. It is important to note that this type of activity can be a sort of content based language lesson that easily fits into the teacher's expertise as a writing teacher.

Additionaly, the yearbook is also a valuable public relations tool for presenting a positive community image to prospective students. It can also serve to inform the greater community, be it a university or other associated programs, about the program itself. One such publication directed towards informing the greater community is a yearbook put out by the Community College of Philadelphia. The Community College of Philadelphia puts out this magazine called New Sights New Visions. The editors state, "It is with pleasure that we share these insights into the lives and diverse cultures of foreign-born students".

Conclusion

The production of some kind of public consumption document such as a newsletter or yearbook, presents a number of useful

opportunities. A wide specified audience provides a very different kind of evaluation which may be as satisfying as a good grade, or more so.

Secondly, a project like this brings students together to focus on a task. Part of this task focuses on language in that the students must evaluate each others writing and thereby reap the benefits of peer review. However, along with the writing and reading skills involved, the speaking and listening skills developed during negotiation are invaluable. In this case the task centered value of a project takes the focus off language as evaluated output and onto language as a mode of communication.

Thirdly, a published project is a form of personal expression and satisfaction for the students. Students may feel particularly satisfied with the final product since they have control of the production, and when opportunities are provided for them to contribute according to non-language based expertise. Students may also suddenly focus all the built-up emotion about their experience of the program onto the yearbook, which then becomes a valued possesion. Students come to me months after the session they attened to get copies of yearbooks from their session

Finally, the wider community can learn about the international students by reading this publication. In this way the publication also serves as a valuable public relations tool for the program as a showpiece of community effort and information.

First Draft without Correction

People say Drugs and Amsterdam in one breath and I feel bad because The Netherlands is a beautiful country. It used to be easy to get into it because The Netherlands was very free; and that is how it all started.

Drugs are a big problem in Amsterdam but the biggest problem is the dealers. Their networks are so big that the police can't break them. People from Colombia, Bolivia and other South American countries are the big drug dealers in Amsterdam.

This all came up very fast and out laws are not based on this problem. If they catch "the topman" somebody else will take his place and in the time they catch this "new man", the "topman" already comes out of jail and the circle keeps going. That's one of the reasons why we are closing our doors to foreigners.

Because of the drug dealing there become more and more people in and around Amsterdam who use drugs. And they become a problem too, because they need more and more and will steal to be able to buy some.

If we can get rid of the dealers we can help the users to solve their problem, because we have good hospitals who give good assistance. Just look at the other side - it's good!

Final Printed Essay

Whenever somebody asks me where I am from, I tell them I an from the Netherlands. They have never heard of it. Then I say Amsterdam and they recognize <u>that</u>, and they say, "Oh, the place where drugs are legal!". When a person says drugs and Amsterdam in one breath and I feel bad because the Netherlands is a beautiful country.

It used to be easy to get into the Netherlands because residency laws were not strict. A lot of immigrants came to the Netherlands from all over the world and many brought their connections with international drug networks with them. These networks are so powerful that the police can't break them. This all came up very suddenly and fast, and our laws are not based on this problem. If they catch "the topman" of a drug network, somebody else will take his place. By the time they catch this "new Man", "the topman" already gets out of jail and the circle keeps going. That's why we are closing our doors to foreigners. For example, Chiphol airport is very strict about checking almost everything that comes through.

Because of the drug dealing, there are more and more people in and around Amsterdam who use drugs. And they become a problem too, because they need more and more drugs and will steal to be able to buy the drugs they crave. Maybe if we can get rid of the dealers we can help the users to solve their problems, because we have good hospitals which give good assistance.

Just make sure you look at the other side!